

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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**VA PLEDGES TO KEEP FORT MONMOUTH CLINIC OPEN,
AND IN MONMOUTH COUNTY**

*Secretary Nicholson Pledges Services for Veterans
Will Continue Regardless of Ft. Monmouth's Final Status*

(Washington, DC.) – Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson has assured New Jersey's Congressional delegation that veterans in Monmouth County will continue to receive VA health care regardless of Ft. Monmouth's final status. Nicholson's letter (dated October 7) came in response to an August 30 letter from Senators Jon Corzine and Frank Lautenberg, along with Representatives Rush Holt (D-NJ), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), and Chris Smith (R-NJ), in which the lawmakers expressed deep concern about the potential loss of the VA clinic.

Secretary Nicholson wrote, "Please be assured that if Congress does not disapprove the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission recommendations and Fort Monmouth is closed, the Fort Monmouth VA [Community-Based Outpatient Clinic] shall be maintained in its current location at least until the year 2010. If for any reason VA is required to relocate clinic services, we shall afford you the opportunity to participate in identifying a new site within Monmouth County."

New Jersey law makers reacted positively to Secretary Nicholson's pledge.

"I'm pleased by Secretary Nicholson's commitment that the VA will keep a clinic operating in Monmouth County whether or not Ft. Monmouth closes," said Holt. "Veterans in central New Jersey deserve timely, convenient access to VA health care, and I'll take whatever measures are necessary to hold VA to its word on this."

"The VA's assurance that it will permanently house a veterans' clinic in Monmouth County is good news for the 2,500 veterans who currently receive care at the Patterson Army Health Clinic," Pallone said. "Veterans living in central New Jersey rely on the clinic, and it's important that they have access to a facility in Monmouth County regardless of what happens to Fort Monmouth."

"It is critical that veterans in Monmouth County continue to have access to quality health care services," said Senator Lautenberg. "My colleagues and I will closely monitor this issue to ensure the Bush administration does what it has promised."

(more)

“This is an important commitment to the veterans of Monmouth and Ocean counties,” Senator Corzine said. “Our veterans have given so much to our nation, and it is up to all of us to remember our promises to them. New Jersey has one of the largest veterans’ populations in the country, and as this population ages the availability of local health care becomes an even more critical issue.”

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